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SUBJECT: Visit of NASA Deputy Administrator Dale to the
Canadian Space Agency

11. (U) Summary: On May 23, NASA Deputy Administrator Shana Dale and NASA Assistant Administrator Michael F. OBrien met with the Acting President of the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) Carole Lacombe and a team of CSA experts to discuss current and future areas for U.S.-Canadian space cooperation. Embassy Ottawa EMIN Brian Mohler and ConGen Montreal Econ officer Anne Coleman also attended the meeting. Ms. Lacombe gave an overview of the CSAs mission and operations, underscored the importance of the U.S. as a partner for the CSA, and spoke about the importance of encouraging grass-roots level support for space exploration. She anticipates getting Canadian cabinet approval in June to allow CSA to negotiate a space framework agreement with the U.S. Deputy Administrator Dale reassured her Canadian counterparts about the strong U.S. commitment to the International Space Station, and expressed the need to continue a dialogue about space exploration with Canada and other international partners. End summary.

Canada pursues niche expertise in space science

12. (U) The CSA, created in 1989 as an agency of the Canadian government, reports to Minister of Industry Maxime Bernier. It has its headquarters in a Montreal suburb, runs a testing and integration facility in Ottawa, and has offices in Ottawa, Washington, Paris, and Houston. The CSA contracts nearly three quarters of its C\$300 million annual operating budget to industry and academia. With such a modest budget, the CSA focuses on developing expertise in niche markets of space exploration, such as the human adaptation to the space environment, robotics, and automation. Canada also pursues international partnerships to help it leverage its niche expertise with the United States, Europe, Japan, Russia, and India, among others. With 7000 employees and C\$2.9 billion in annual revenues, the Canadian space sector is dispersed throughout the country, and is comprised mostly of small and medium-sized enterprises.

13. (U) Ms. Lacombe noted that she wished to explore how the use of Canadian technology in niche fields could further support U.S. space activities. The Canadian-developed program RadarSat offers the technology to take surface images through clouds, detect oil spills by changes in the roughness of the ocean surface, and measure hurricane wind speed at ground level rather than at airplane-height. CloudSat, a joint NASA-CSA program in which radar slices through clouds to assess their vertical structure, has revolutionized the observational capacity from space, and demonstrated the impact of U.S.-Canadian space cooperation.

¶4. (U) Ms. Lacombe said that the recent election of a minority conservative government had impacted the importance space exploration would be granted on the Canadian governments agenda. While she acknowledged that the Harper governments current efforts mostly focused on delivering the priorities presented during the recent election campaign (in which space exploration was not an issue), she stated that the CSA is seeking Industry Minister Maxime Berniers support for space investments. She noted that the fact that Minister Bernier hails from Quebec might also make him more open to strengthening a government institution headquartered in his home province. At the same time, Ms. Lacombe noted that the CSA would need to create a case for participating in space research with the Canadian government. CSA expects shortly to receive Cabinet approval to conclude a framework agreement with the U.S. that will allow it to pursue international cooperation in space exploration without needing parliamentary approval for individual projects. This should brighten prospects for the ease of future U.S.-Canadian space cooperation.

Future prospects for US-Canadian space cooperation

¶5. (U) Ms. Lacombe noted that the CSA (including the space industry and its associated research community) remains interested in participating in space exploration and that Canada fully supports the International Exploration Workshops on returning to the Moon. Affirming that NASA

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is our most important partner, Ms. Lacombe noted that Canada has strategic capabilities in the field of space research and that its interactions with NASA over the near-term would aid its efforts to secure more political engagement and budget commitments towards further space exploration. She raised the possibility of using lessons from the existing International Space Station as a starting point for future exploration(s). She speculated that further engagement and investments on Canadas part would be likely to materialize were Canada able to attain a meaningful, visible, and sustainable role in space exploration, and that the U.S.-Canada Framework agreement, once approved, would make future space cooperation easier to pursue. Ms. Lacombe stated that grass roots support for the Vision for Space Exploration would be crucial in attaining future government support and continuing momentum.

¶6. (U) Deputy Administrator Dale assured her CSA counterparts of the USGs strong commitment to the International Space Station and the importance of the mutually beneficial partnership of U.S.-Canadian space cooperation. She noted the success of the recent exploration strategy workshop. Members of the workshop inquired about how governance of lunar territory would operate, wondering whether an Antarctic model would be used. Deputy Administrator Dale noted that the presence of more traditional and less traditional partners would make certain governance structures more difficult to implement in space exploration. She affirmed the U.S. commitment to working with international partners to extend the human presence outside of the Low Earth Orbit, a feat that has not been accomplished in the last thirty-five years.

¶7. (U) Heralding the success of the Space Exploration Strategy Workshop (held in April 2006), Deputy Administrator Dale noted that it had offered the possibility for space-faring nations to generate ideas about how best to move forward in space exploration and how to develop an effective strategy to deal with space efforts

after the end of both the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station programs. Although she acknowledged that she could not make any commitments that would bind future administrations to space exploration commitments, she noted that the U.S. support for the Vision of Space Exploration (lunar exploration and beyond) has been, and would likely remain, strong. The Space Shuttle will be retired in 2010. Although the International Space Station is due for retirement in 2016, NASA is investigating what it would take to extend its life beyond that date, potentially to 2020.

18. (U) NASAs Jennifer Troxell has cleared this cable.

MARSHALL